



NEWS RELEASE

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Safer Beds Highlighted During Fire Prevention Week

SACRAMENTO – California consumers can rest easier knowing they have a historic new choice in home fire safety – purchasing a bed that protects against the danger of open-flame-ignited bedroom fires.

In a national first, the state law requiring mattresses, mattress/box springs sets and futons to resist open flames will take effect on Jan. 1, 2005. Consumers can find the products in some stores now. Several large and small manufacturers are expected to make the safer products available in the coming months, and all the major manufacturers are expected to have them available by the first of the year.

“Fire Prevention Week is a great opportunity to let consumers know they can choose beds that offer vastly enhanced resistance to open-flame. It’s a choice that could literally save lives,” said Director Charlene Zettel of the California Department of Consumer Affairs. “But don’t forget a safer mattress is only one part of improving fire safety. Make sure your smoke alarms are working, and teach children how to protect themselves from fire danger.”

State Fire Marshal Ruben Grijalva said the safer beds required by the new law will make California a safer place to live.

“The fire service, in California and across the nation, has been responding to bedroom fires with serious injuries and deaths caused by ignition of mattresses and bedding materials,” said Grijalva. “This new fire safety standard in California will serve as a model for the nation on how to effectively safeguard lives and property.”

Nationwide, about 1,000 lives are lost annually to fires that start in bedrooms, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. Children are often victims in bedroom fires, as bedrooms are often where children play with fire. Mattress and bedding fires are one of the leading causes of fire deaths associated with consumer products, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

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In response to legislation that became law in 2001, the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation developed the new California open-flame-protection standard for mattresses, mattress/box springs sets and futons, called "Technical Bulletin 603."

"For consumers and bedding retailers who want to learn more about Technical Bulletin 603, we have several tip sheets available," said Zettel.

For more information on Technical Bulletin 603, including tips for consumers and retailers, visit the bureau Web site at www.bhfti.ca.gov.

To find an open-flame-resistant product built after Jan. 1, 2005, consumers can check the required mattress label containing the statement: "This product meets the requirements of the California Bureau of Home Furnishings Technical Bulletin 603." To determine if a product manufactured in 2004 meets the new standard, consumers should check with the retailer and manufacturer, because the label isn't required to have the "Technical Bulletin 603" statement.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), which regulates bedding products nationally, is expected to move forward with a national open-flame-resistance standard for beds, but it won't likely take effect earlier than 2006. The California bureau and CPSC continue to cooperate on standards development.

The California mattress flammability standard is also the model for a similar proposed standard incorporated in recently introduced U.S. Senate legislation, the "American Home Fire Safety Act."

Currently, mattresses must meet the federal requirement for resistance to ignition from cigarettes, but they can ignite easily and burn intensely if exposed to open flame. Candles, lighters and matches are common sources of open flames that set mattresses on fire, and a such a fire can be life-threatening in as little as three minutes.

Overall home fire safety remains important – even after the purchase of a new bed or futon that meets the state's new open-flame protection standard – because these safer products are not fireproof and many other bedroom furnishings remain highly flammable.

For more information on the State Fire Marshal, visit the agency's Web site, <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/>.

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